



COD: Cargo on Demand

Story and Photos by Ted Carlson

The carrier deck is bustling with activity. A four-ship of F/A-18 *Hornets* screams by at 300 knots, pitching out one at a time, doing the carrier break and pulling vapor on top of the wings. Within minutes, a pair of F-14D *Super Tomcats* repeat the process and both take the number three wire, followed by the remainder of the air wing assets. Most of the air wing has just returned from an air strike on an aggressive third world nation 150 miles from the carrier. One of the *Hornet* plane captains shakes his head in disappointment when he learns that his bird is down for a critical part not

normally stocked aboard the ship.

Three hours later, things have settled down on the deck and the sound of jet noise has subsided. Then, a distant engine drone can be heard, presaging for many one of the highlights of the day. The ship's company knows the drone is that of the faithful carrier onboard delivery (COD) aircraft carrying parts, mail from family and friends, and important visitors. The COD delivers the desperately needed part, and the *Hornet* plane captain will not only have his aircraft ready for the next day, but he has also received a letter from home.



The COD, officially known as the Grumman C-2A *Greyhound*, deploys aboard aircraft carriers as an integral part of the air wing. Although the C-2A may not be the most glamorous aircraft in the fleet, its logistics mission is critical to Naval Aviation's success.

The C-2A typically has a crew of four—pilot and copilot, as well as two crew chiefs in the rear—and can carry another 26 passengers. If seats are not needed, they can be stacked to make additional cargo

A brace of *Greyhounds* from VRC-30 reflect the waning light of the setting sun.

room. In contrast to traditional airliners, the C-2A seats face backwards. This allows passengers to better withstand the force of a water impact.

The *Greyhound* carries enough fuel to last for five hours, unless equipped with extended-range tanks that double endurance time. There are only three C-2A operators in the fleet: the *Providers* of Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 30, NAS North Island, Calif.; and the *Rawhides* of VRC-40 and *Greyhawks* of Carrier Airborne Early Warning



COD crew . . . Above, pilot Lt. Steve Lippincott, left, and copilot Lt. Trey Glaze, right, guide their trusty steed near the Salton Sea in California. The muscular-looking C-2A, right, “handles well when landing and is a comfortable aircraft to fly,” Lippincott explained. Below, left to right, Lt. Ben White, AE2 Stephen Dyson, Lt. Keith Shaffler and AME2 Joe Patterson finish another successful mission, coming home to NAS North Island.



Squadron 120, both at NS Norfolk, Va.

Greyhound pilot Lieutenant Steve Lippincott of VRC-30 said of the C-2A, “For the payload we can bring aboard, the number of passengers we can carry and the long distances we can fly, the aircraft gives the Navy a great bang for the buck.”

VRC-30 just surpassed 23 years and 144,000 hours without an aircraft loss. Skipper Commander Steve Kingston commented, “We provide high-priority passengers and cargo to the carrier and the battle group. The C-2A is a great airplane and is very reliable, a result of the efforts of our maintainers.” But, he continued, “As our COD fleet ages, we need to procure a new aircraft similar to the C-2. Ideally, it would be equipped with turbofan engines. Since the S-3B *Viking’s* days are coming to a close, the new aircraft could be multirole, providing not only logistical support but airborne refueling as well. The Navy needs a reliable new



tanker in addition to a new COD, and all alternatives will be explored.”

Summing up the squadron mission, Cdr. Kingston stated, “We are all naval ambassadors. In our squadron we meet a lot of foreign dignitaries and always put our best foot forward. For a typical det, we move over 2,500 people and 750,000 pounds of cargo during one deployment. With the existing detachment system in place, our people are happy, and that is very important to me. The quality of life in VRC-30 is good. I am pleased with everybody assigned to this command. From the most junior person on up, these unsung heroes keep the planes flying!” ✈

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